

REMARKS

Claims 1-31 remain in the application.

Claims 14-20 are allowed per paragraph 11 on page 6 of the Office Action dated 1/27/2005.

Claims 1-13 and 21-31 remain for consideration.

Claims 1-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) on Hyde 4,030,850. Claim 1 has been amended to recite the couplers as being configured to provide both longitudinal and angular relative movement therebetween as shown and described with reference to FIGS. 8-11 of the present application. Grooves 54,58 in Hyde simply provide bending of Hyde's interlocking flanges 14 and 16 as the couplers are being assembled. Grooves 54 and 58 do not provide articulation or longitudinal movement subsequent to assembly of the joint in the manner provided by the present application. Hyde and no other reference discloses or suggests such a configuration. Therefore, claims 1-5 are now in condition for allowance.

The dependent claims also recite features not found in Hyde. For example, claim 2 specifically recites the gasket as being located *between* the male coupling end portion and the interlocking male coupler projection. With reference to FIG. 7 of the present application, claim 2 specifically locates the gasket D between the terminal end 74 and the interlocking projection 88. In contrast, Hyde has the gasket 52 located on the opposite side of interlocking projection R1 from the terminal end of the coupler.

Claim 26 recites the same advantageous arrangement as claim 2 wherein the gasket is *between* the interlocking projection and the terminal end rather than on the *opposite side* of the projection from the terminal end as in Hyde. Therefore, claims 26-31 also are in condition for allowance.

Claims 1, 7-10, 11 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) on Salter et al 5,797,627. Salter et al does not disclose or suggest a coupling joint that is configured to provide longitudinal and angular relative movement when the couplers are interconnected as recited in claim 1.

Claims 7 and 8 have been amended to more specifically locate the spline relative to the main coupler portions and their cylindrical outer surfaces. Amended claims 7 and 8 cannot

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possibly be read on Salter et al. Claims 9 and 10 recite features not found in Salter et al when taken with allowable parent claim 1.

Claim 11 cannot be read on Salter et al. Claim 11 has been amended to insert reference numbers found in FIG. 3 of the present application. The Examiner cannot properly change identification of parts in Salter et al to try to read the reference on the claim.

The Examiner indicates that Salter et al discloses a female coupling portion 750 and a spline portion 751. The Examiner contends that Salter et al discloses a sloping cam surface 760 that extends from a terminal end (the only terminal end that surface 760 extends from is the terminal end 755 of the spline portion 751). The surface 760 slopes *away* from the longitudinal axis from terminal end 755 rather than *toward* it as recited in the claim.

The area of Salter et al's coupling 750 that is generally indicated by 730 is not a terminal end as claimed, but is the only reference point from which surface 760 slopes toward the longitudinal axis. Furthermore, the sloping surface 760 is actually part of the spline portion rather than a part of the female coupling portion that slopes back toward the spline portion as claimed.

Claim 12 has been amended to recite the spline portion as having barbs on both its inner and outer surfaces. Salter et al has a smooth interior surface 760 which is not and could not be barbed. Salter et al does not disclose or suggest the features now recited in claims 12 and 13.

Claim 21 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) on Gowen 5,145,283. Gowen has a pipe bell with internal O-rings that are lubricated. Both of the bell and spigot ends of the Gowen pipe are covered and the open ends are closed by a heat shrink plastic film. The art does not suggest or provide any motivation for one of ordinary skill in the art to move the Gowen O-rings to the exterior of the spigot end and to then cover such moved O-rings with a wrap that does not close or extend across the open end of the spigot.

The Examiner indicated that claim 6 has method limitations that are given no consideration. However, both claims 6 and 29 recite couplers that have longitudinally welded joints. Both claims have a positive structural non-method limitation of a longitudinal welded joint. The references do not disclose a coupler of the type claimed with a longitudinal weld joint.

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In the absence of more pertinent art, this application is now in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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